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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000436

SIPDIS

SUBJECT: CG USAFE FROM DATT/ARMA DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [MOPSMARR](#) [NATO](#) [HR](#) [DEFENSE](#) [REFORM](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR GEN BRADY, CG USAFE, VISIT TO CROATIA

CLASSIFIED BY: COL BRENDAN MCALOON, DATT/ARMA, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

¶1. (SBU) Monday 20 July, you are scheduled to meet with U.S. Embassy country team representatives headed by Charge Vivian Walker. Following your meeting with the embassy country team, Croatian Air Force Commander, MG Vlado Bagaric (BAAG-r-itch) will receive you at Pleso Air Base. Tuesday morning 21 July, picks up with a currently-scheduled meeting the Croatian Minister of Defense Branko Vukelic (VOOK-al-itch) and Chief of the General Staff, GEN Josip Lucic (LOOTS-itch) in Zagreb. After noon on 21 July, Croatian Army Commander, LTG Mladen Kruljac (KREWL-yatz) is scheduled to host you during an orientation of Slunj military training range.

¶2. (C) Atmospherics. Your trip comes at a time when the excellent security relationship between Croatia and the United States continues to strengthen. Croatia appreciated the United States being one of earliest countries to ratify Croatia's NATO accession protocol.

¶3. (C) Croatian Air Force. The Croatian Air Force has one squadron of MiG-21,s which are approaching the end of their service life. The Ministry of Defense Long-Term Development Plan (LTDP) identifies procurement of new multi-role fixed wing fighters as the top priority for the Air Force. F-16 and Gripen are front runners for this procurement. However, budgetary constraints are forcing indefinite delays with procuring fighters. Aside from the MiG-21,s, the Croatian Air Force owns a variety of MI-8/MI-171Sh helicopters, a pair of AN-32 cargo aircraft and Canadair water bombers used to fight wild fires. Croatian Air Force pilots generally fall short of flight hour goals and pilot retention is a growing problem for the Air Force.

¶4. (C) Slunj Military Training Range. Slunj range is prospectively a location where U.S. military aircrews could conduct air-to-ground training. Negotiating an agreement for access to Slunj range has been a slow, intermittent process affected by domestic political concerns.

¶5. (C) KFOR. Two new Croatian Air Force MI-171Sh lift helicopters deployed to Camp Bondsteel on 4 July 2009. This is the first deployment outside of Croatia for the Air Force. Croatia sees this as a test run deployment for the Air Force and has not closed the door on deployment of helicopters in support of ISAF in the future.

¶6. (C) Partner Training. Croatia has been identified as the priority of effort for improving partner nation,s

SOF-capable vertical lift. The next step in developing a training program will occur in September when we will enter discussions with the Croatian Air Force about a way forward.

¶7. (U) Humanitarian Assistance. The main body of USAFE Red Horse engineers arrived last week to Knin, Croatia. The 14 airmen will conduct a Humanitarian Civic Assistance project (HCA linked to Exercise GUARDEX ,09) at the children's ward of the Knin Public Hospital. Their work will include installing air conditioning, refurbishing the patient bathrooms, and painting the interior walls with high gloss paint for a sterile environment. The project is valued at \$130,000 and will be completed in August. A ribbon cutting ceremony will not be held until September due to preferences of the USAFE unit and Embassy Zagreb.

¶8. (C) OMLTs. Prior to NATO accession in April, Croatia had the only non-NATO OMLT in Afghanistan as part of its approximately 300 troops in ISAF. Since NATO membership, Croatia has deployed two more OMLTs: one garrison OMLT and one combined Combat Support OMLT with their state partner, the Minnesota National Guard (MNNG). The OMLTs are deployed with the 209th ANA Corps and are based in Mazar-e-Sharif. Croatia pays all expenses for their OMLTs with the exception of U.S.-provided stratlift. They have no operational limitations on deployment or ROE, but do have two caveats: no CT and no Counter-narcotics operations. The deployment with U.S. Soldiers is a point of pride for the Croatian Army.

¶9. (C) Peacekeeping: Croatia prides itself on its transition from a security consumer with UN Peacekeepers on its territory to a security provider with Croatian Armed Forces (CAF) elements involved in fourteen UN peacekeeping operations around the globe, to include 98 CAF personnel on the UN mission in the Golan Heights. Croatia has deployed 15 of its Special Forces soldiers to the UN-led mission in Chad

where they are serving within the Polish sector. With these deployments Croatia is in the process of implementing its plans to increase and sustain its PKO contributions from around 250 soldiers in 2007 to 600 soldiers by 2010.

¶10. (C) ASPA: The U.S. FMF and IMET programs were suspended in July 2003 due to American Serviceman Protection Act (ASPA) sanctions. As a result, in the past few years the CAF depended entirely upon national resources to accomplish its NATO partnership goals and to equip its forces for ISAF. Croatia is the only ISAF partner and new NATO member that accomplished its transformation and financed its ISAF commitments without FMF or Coalition Support Funding. The suspension of IMET during this time has had a telling impact throughout the CAF. Most notably is the lack of U.S.-educated staff officers at the senior and mid-grade officer level to fill critical billets on the MOD, CAF, and NATO Staffs.

¶11. (SBU) FMF/IMET levels. Croatia did not receive any FMF in FY08, and is projected to receive only 1 million in FMF and 500K in 2009. The proposed budget numbers trend better in FYs 10 and 11.

¶12. Suggested Talking Points.

-Congratulations on earning full NATO membership. We look forward to working with the Croatian military as you continue your transformation and modernization.

- We remain interested in air-to-ground training at Slunj range and see potential training benefits to the Croatian Air Force and Ground Forces in the training. We also recognize the sensitivity of your allowing us access to Slunj and will work with you to develop appropriate parameters for the training.

-Thank You for your contribution to ISAF. Your OMLTs set an example for the coalition to follow.